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DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

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With regard to resolution 437(XIX) entitled "Access to sources of information", it should first be mentioned that in recent years CEPAL has begun the task of the systematization, using computers, of the various types of statistical information available regarding the Latin American countries. This work encompasses statistics on various economic and social activities -population, national accounts, the external sector, etc.- for the purpose of assembling and providing timely information for the region as a whole and for some subregional groups. It also allows the necessary statistical background information to be supplied for the periodic editions of the Economic Survey of Latin America and other research, publications and statistical yearbooks of the Secretariat.

Of special interest are the notes on the preliminary assessment of the Latin American economic situation which the Executive Secretary of CEPAL has presented each year since 1975 in his year-end press conferences. On these occasions, the institution's estimates are given regarding the evolution of the Latin American economy for the current year. The background information included in that document is primarily of a short-run nature and takes into account, inter alia, aspects of the evolution of the gross domestic product of the Latin American countries, the balance of payments, exports and imports of goods and services, the terms of trade and domestic prices. The subsequent publication of the Economic Survey allows the subject areas discussed in these notes to be supplemented and expanded upon.

Referring specifically to the field of information regarding international trade and the external sector, in keeping with the spirit of resolution 437(XIX), it should first be observed that the available CEPAL series include data on balance-of-payments statistics for the Latin American countries since 1950. The basic information comes from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an organization which has systematized the compilation of balance-of-payments statistics throughout the world, using data provided by the countries on the basis of the instructions and recommendations contained in the successive editions of the Fund's Balance of Payments Manual. The data provided by countries to the IMF have been published regularly in its Balance of Payments Yearbook and have recently also been recorded on magnetic tape for greater ease of handling and use.

Based on the IMF data, CEPAL maintains an up-to-date series on the balance of payments of the Latin American countries for the period beginning in 1950, with a somewhat different format from the IMF's. The data for the most recent year are also estimated by CEPAL on the basis of partial data obtained directly from the countries. Furthermore, CEPAL has developed a methodology for periodically calculating balance-of-payments current account values at constant prices and, as complementary data, the purchasing power of exports and the terms-of-trade effect.1/ These series are of great value in the analysis of external sector trends and policies.

1/ An analysis of the methodology used by CEPAL for the preparation and presentation of these statistics is given in El balance de pagos de América Latina, 1950-1977, Cuadernos Estadísticos de la CEPAL, Santiago, Chile, 1979.

/Secondly, and

Secondly, and also in connection with the external sector, CEPAL has been developing a computer programme of background information regarding the Latin American countries' exports and imports of goods. The basic data for this programme come from the countries themselves and are placed on magnetic tapes. The records include standardized information allowing for statistical comparability among the countries of the region themselves, as well as with other countries, on the basis of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) of the United Nations.

In order to permit more extensive and better use of the information compiled, the CEPAL programme also takes into account the use of other international classifications such as that of the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC); the International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities (ISIC) of the United Nations; the Uniform Classification by Economic Use or Destination (CUODE) of CEPAL; and the Classification by Broad Economic Categories (CBEC) of the United Nations.

Thus, background information on exports and imports, by products, according to the national statistical classification is available for each Latin American country. These data are broken down by trading-partner country of destination or origin, respectively. The information which has been centralized to date is listed in detail in annex 1. It may be added that with the computer programmes currently in operation, the processed data have already begun to be used for various studies of the CEPAL Secretariat.

In addition, it is expected that interested national and international institutions will have access to this information through tabulations, printouts and recorded magnetic tapes provided by CEPAL, once the corresponding operational mechanisms are established.

Thirdly, within its programme of activities the CEPAL Secretariat has been carrying out studies for a number of years on the evolution of the foreign debt of Latin American countries as regards the amount of the debt, its composition or profile, the debt service schedule, etc. The efforts to quantify the external indebtedness contracted by private sectors without any State guarantee and include it in the sum total of the debt, as well as the efforts to determine the cost of the debt measured in terms of real resources, from the viewpoint of both the debtor and creditor, have been of particular significance. The statistical information used in the proposed activities comes in large part from the World Bank and is supplemented with information provided by the countries of the region themselves and with data prepared by the Bank for International Settlements.

Based on the studies regarding the evolution of the Latin American foreign debt, it has become feasible to evaluate how extensively and rapidly the problem of the foreign debt burden has intensified and become widespread in the region. This might make it desirable to establish voluntary-access mechanisms for refinancing the foreign debt; however, these mechanisms should be based on objective indicators which would permit the recommendation of forms of financial assistance adapted to the needs and circumstances of each country, on terms which would facilitate its future payment.

/Lastly, it

Lastly, it is worth noting in this review of information activities corresponding to international trade and the external sector that the Secretariats of UNCTAD and CEPAL are attempting to launch a joint technical co-operation project designed to support the external sector of the Latin American countries; if financial assistance is received from UNDP for this purpose, the project could begin to function in the second half of 1983.

This joint project would permit better use to be made of the studies carried out by UNCTAD regarding international economic relations and the analyses of the Latin American external sector prepared by CEPAL. This would provide a good material foundation for the preparation of national economic policies, based on the information presented in those studies and analyses and the discussions they contain regarding the possible consequences of the measures which might be adopted.

In sum, efforts are related to intensifying and systematizing the mechanisms for co-operation between the Secretariats of UNCTAD and CEPAL in the field of information on international economic relations, while at the same time ensuring and reinforcing co-operation in this field with the Latin American governments and with the relevant regional and subregional agencies.

The CEPAL Secretariat submits this preliminary report on the understanding that a complete study on the possibilities for expanding economic and trade information will be delivered at the Commission's twentieth session in 1984.

/Annex 1

Annex 1

FOREIGN TRADE STATISTICS CENTRALIZED IN CEPAL

COUNTRIES	1961 to 1969		1970		1971		1972		1973		1974		1975		1976		1977		1978		1979		1980	
	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP	EXP	IMP
Argentina	D	D	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	-	-
Bolivia	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brazil	D	D	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	D	C	-
Colombia	D	D	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	C	C	C	C	C	F	D	D	D	D	D
Costa Rica	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	-	-	-
Chile	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	-	-	-	-
Ecuador	D	D	M	C	C	C	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	F	C	F	C	C	C	D	D	D	-	-
El Salvador	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	-	-	-
Guatemala	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	-	-	-
Guyana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	-	-
Honduras	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	-	-	-
Jamaica	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	D	D	D	D
Mexico	D	D	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	C	D	C	D	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nicaragua	-	-	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	-	-	-	-
Panama	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	-	-
Paraguay	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	D	-	-
Peru	D	D	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dominican Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D	D	D	-	D	-	D	-	D	D	D	D	-	-	D	D
Trinidad and Tobago	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	D
Uruguay	D	-	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	F	-
Venezuela	D	D	M	M	M	:	M	D	M	D	M	M	M	M	C	F	C	F	C	C	F	D	D	D
TOTAL																								

EXPLANATORY NOTES:
EXP = Exports of goods according to the national statistical classification, by countries of destination; quantity and FOB value in dollars.
IMP = Imports of goods according to the national statistical classification, by countries of origin; quantity and CIF value in dollars.
D = Data centralized in CEPAL and recorded on magnetic tape without standardization processes.
F = Data converted to the common format adopted by CEPAL, according to the national statistical classification.
C = For each product, in addition to the national statistical classification code, the data include the code corresponding to the Nomenclature of the Customs Co-operation Council (CCCN); the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC); the Uniform Classification by Economic Use or Destination (CUODE); the classification into commodities, semi-manufactures and manufactures used by UNCTAD; and the Classification by Broad Economic Categories (CBEC).
M = In addition to the classifications in paragraph C above, these data include the International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities (ISIC). This stage completes the process of data compatibilization and standardization, and thus completes the master file of CEPAL on foreign trade.
- = Not available.